

## Alaskans die by guns at almost double the national rate. 75% of all Alaskan gun deaths are by suicide.

- Alaska has a high number of firearm fatalities, with a mortality rate nearly double the national rate (19.7 vs. 10.3 per 100,000 persons, respectively).<sup>1</sup>
- Of the 1,000 firearm fatalities in Alaska between 2009-2015, 750 (75%) were deaths by suicide, 152 (15%) were homicide, and the remaining 98 (10%) were due to unintentional injury, legal interventions or were undetermined.<sup>2</sup>
- Nearly 2/3 of all suicides in Alaska involve firearms.<sup>2</sup>
- Alaskans are four times more likely to die by suicide from a firearm than in a homicide.<sup>1</sup>
- Nearly 1/3 of all suicide deaths by firearm in Alaska are by someone who has experienced at least one mental health condition such as depression, anxiety disorder, or bipolar disorder.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> According to the Alaska Violent Death Reporting System.  
<sup>2</sup> According to Alaska Health Analytics and Vital Records.

## Suicide Warning Signs

These are common warning signs that someone is at risk of suicide:

- Threatening to hurt or kill him or herself, or talking about wanting to hurt or kill him or herself.
- Looking for ways to kill himself or herself by seeking access to firearms, pills or medications, or other means.
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide when these actions are out of the ordinary for the person.
- Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities—seemingly without thinking.
- Experiencing dramatic mood changes.
- Expressing feelings of purposeless or seeing no reason for living.

## Who is at Risk of Suicide?

The people most at risk of dying by suicide are those who:

- Have attempted suicide in the past;
- Feel hopeless, worthless, trapped or intolerably alone;
- Have become isolated from friends, family, society and support systems;
- Have been exposed to the suicide of another person;
- Have increased their use of alcohol or are binge drinkers;
- Have a history of violent behavior;
- Are not receiving the mental health care they need; and/or
- Have a firearm or other means in the home.

*Information is from the American Association of Suicidology*



**Trust**  
Alaska Mental Health  
Trust Authority

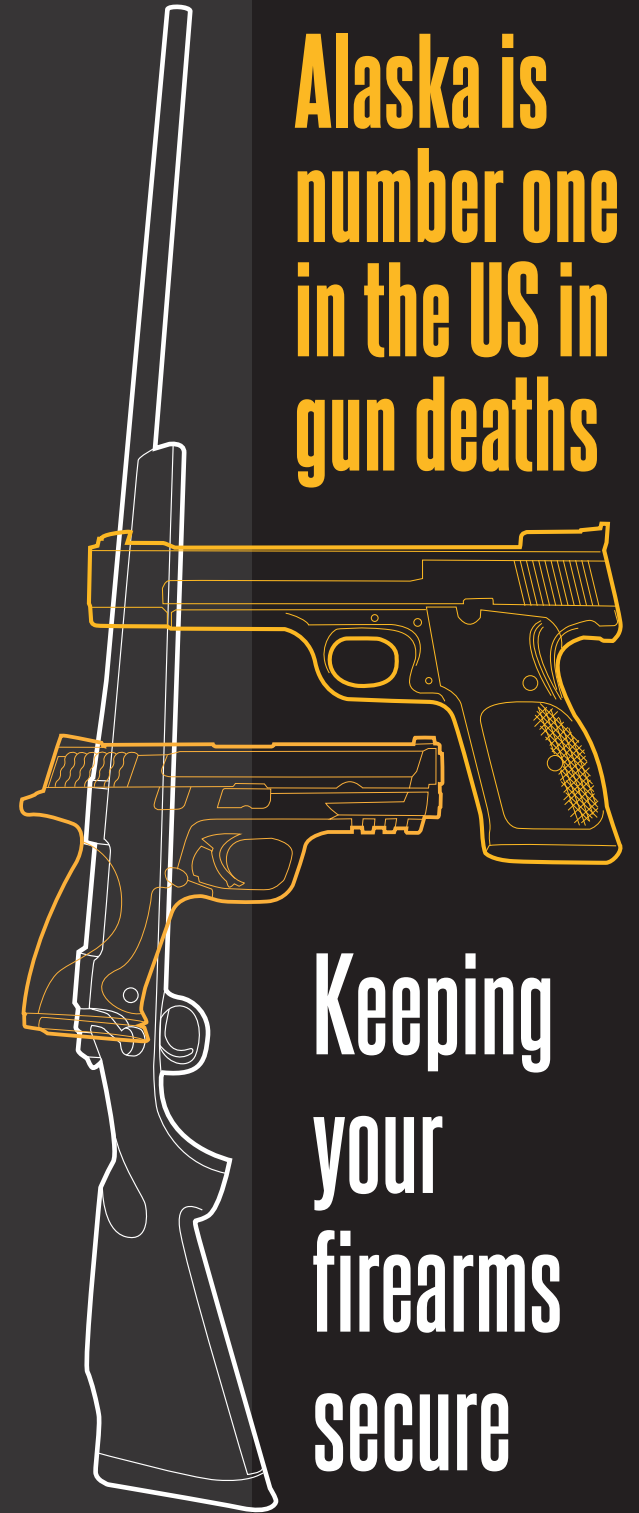
**Call 911 for emergencies**

**Alaska Careline  
1-877-266-HELP (4357)**

**National Suicide Prevention  
Lifeline**

**1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
Veterans: Press 1**

# Alaska is number one in the US in gun deaths



# Keeping your firearms secure

## What you can do

Many suicide attempts occur with little planning during a short-term crisis. When someone feels overwhelmed in a crisis, impulsive actions could tragically mean a life lost to suicide.

Research has shown that separating suicidal individuals from a variety of lethal means can help prevent suicide. It can provide valuable time for suicidal risk and ideation to lessen and for someone to intervene with mental health support and resources.

### Gun locks can provide life-saving moments between impulse and action.

A locked firearm can mean the difference between a tragic outcome and a life saved for someone in crisis. All gun owners should understand that during emotional or stressful times, limiting access to their firearms could prevent suicide.

Gun owners have multiple options for safely storing and protecting firearms when they're not in use: cable locks, lock boxes, gun cases and full size gun safes.

Evidence suggests that those living in households where firearms are stored locked have a lower risk of suicide than those where firearms are stored unlocked.

Because lethal means are such a critical factor when it comes to suicide, the best way to protect the person at risk is to remove all lethal means, including firearms, from the home during the period of suicide risk.

### During high-risk periods, temporary off-site storage of firearms may be the safest option.

When off-site storage is not an option, any step that increases the time and distance between a suicidal impulse and a firearm will reduce suicide risk.

If you are storing a locked firearm in your household during high-risk periods or a crisis, ask a trusted friend or family member to keep the key to the lock for you, or ask them to change the combination on the safe or lock.

### By separating a suicidal person from their firearm even temporarily, you increase their chances of survival.

There is very strong evidence that when those who are suicidal do not have access to a chosen lethal method for suicide, most do not typically shift to a different method. In most cases, they will not go on to make an attempt or end their life.

One of the most important factors we can give a suicidal person is time. Time for

the person to move out of the crisis and regain their usual healthier ways of coping; to receive help; for the attempt to be interrupted; or for the person to change their mind.

If you or someone you love experiences warning signs of a crisis, stay with them and call for help.

## Firearms Safety Checklist

- Properly storing your firearm and ammunition can reduce the risk of suicide and unintentional injury.
- Keep firearms unloaded and ammunition in a place that cannot be accessed by children and unauthorized adults.
- Store ammunition separate from firearms.
- Regularly reassess to ensure safe storage of firearms, especially during periods of increased stress or emotional crisis.
- When someone feels overwhelmed in a crisis, safely and securely storing firearms can provide critical life-saving moments between impulse and action.

